Section 3

Chapter 13. O'Connor, Pat

'Towards a new gender agenda and a model for change'.

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Abstract

Diversity in higher education and research organisations is conducive to research innovation and economic growth (EC 2012a; OECD 2012). Yet male dominated educational institutions have been remarkably resistant to change. Little attention has been paid to the identification of 'best practice' that is, universities which in their gender profile at senior academic and management level, their organisational culture, their formal and informal leadership and the embedding of gender in their purpose, curriculum and research agenda, exemplify a new gender agenda. Building on the case studies, this chapter focuses on definitions of success and on a model for change, identifying key external and internal factors as well as specific interventions. It provides important insights into a new gender agenda and how it can be created.

1 Introduction

Higher education in general, and universities in particular have historically been male dominated in Western Society with positions of power, whether academic or managerial, being overwhelmingly occupied by men: 'gender inequalities in academia appear to be persistent and global phenomena' (Husu 2001, p.172). In South Asia there are occasional examples of women only universities (Morley & Crossouard 2016), where women occupy such positions of power. Globally, with the advent of managerialism a 'macho' individualistic, competitive culture has arguably become further embedded. Although the subject areas where male academic staff have predominated have varied cross nationally, they have typically been most highly valued, with implications for the funding and status of these areas. Thus the power structures, culture and values of higher educational institutions, although potentially autonomous, reflect those of

that wider environment where, to a greater or lesser degree, public power and resources are in male hands. In that context a focus on the presence of women in senior positions in universities can be seen as important. However it can also be argued that it is not sufficient, and that in looking at best practice it is necessary to have a much more nuanced focus on the feminist character of higher educational organisations: their structures, culture, academic content, curricula and leadership.

Organisational change at any level is difficult, with roughly 70 per cent of all change programmes failing (By 2005). In this book we have been concerned with describing globally a-typical examples of best practice in the area of gender in higher education. In a world where male power remains a taken-for-granted reality, both in structural and cultural terms, such examples are inevitably partial: succeeding in some respects, failing in others. Nevertheless, cumulatively they indicate the possibility of change and the beginning of envisioning a new gender agenda. Public universities, which are the focus of this book, are arguably a particularly appropriate context for the creation and dissemination of such a new agenda.

The underlying perspective in this chapter is a critical feminist one (Meyerson & Kolb 2000) combined with various kinds of institutional approaches, including neo-institutional (Greenwood & Hinings 1996) and inhabited institutional (Hallett 2010) and the emerging field of feminist institutionalism (Mackay et al, 2010; Krook and Mackay, 2011) since it uniquely highlights the gendered character of institutions. Meyerson and Kolb (2000) critique what they call liberal individualism ('equip the woman'), 'liberal structuralism ('create equal opportunity') and women's standpoint/advantage ('value difference'). The approach they favour (drawing on Acker 1990) focuses on 'resisting and re-visiting the dominant discourse'. Implicit in the very idea of a university is the potential to challenge existing power structures and dominant discourses. Myerson and Kolb (2000, p. 563) see gender as 'an axis of power, an organising principle that shapes social structure, identities and knowledge'. The idea that all

aspects of organisational life, all decisions, procedures, structures, cultures, value commitments, evaluations as well as the identities of those who work in them, are shaped by gender is implicit. Such a critical feminist perspective requires the problematizing of power relations at all levels.

Paradoxically in public institutions there is an implicit pressure to embed equality as a marker of acceptability in an era concerned with public accountability (Feree & Zippel 2015). Elements of an equality agenda are explicitly endorsed by some states (e.g. through their legislative frameworks); by cross-national organisations such as the EU and the OECD (through their policy documents and research funding); by individual leaders and academics (Nielsen, 2015; van den Brink & Benschop 2012), and by collective gender change agents (including Athena Swan). All of these implicitly or explicitly recognise that gender is in some way impacting on organisational processes, procedures and practices. Hence at some level they are problematizing the dominant discourse of a gender neutral organisation.

Yet a gender neutral meritocractic model is the one typically endorsed by universities. Neo-institutional theory (Greenwood & Hinings 1996, pp. 1025-1027) highlights the importance of the wider institutional context and 'its ideas, values and beliefs' and suggests that 'organisations are structured in terms of archetypes'; and that 'there is a normative tone to institutional discussions'. Movement from a gender neutral archetype to one involved in 'resisting and re-visiting the dominant discourse' (Meyerson & Kolb 2000) involves a paradigm shift. Not surprisingly this will be resisted to varying degrees by organisations, depending on the extent to which the new model is compatible with their values, interests, power dependencies and capacity for action (Greenwood & Hinings 1996). Given their multiple stakeholders and the creative ambiguity surrounding the core purpose of universities, newer, less established, mould breaking universities are most likely to be characterised by a potential willingness to enact gender change.

The focus in this book is on universities which exemplify best practice in terms of gender to varying degrees (in some cases despite the wider legislative context). The focus on intra-organisational factors is particularly strong in an 'inhabited institutional' approach (Hallett 2010) which concentrates on internal factors in understanding 'why some organizations adopt radical change whereas others do not, despite experiencing the same institutional pressures' (Greenwood & Hinings 1996, p.1023). In this context elites perpetuate themselves (as they did in collegial structures), with gender bias, reflected in homosociability, frequently obscuring this.

In this chapter the focus is first on exploring the complexity of definitions of success; and second, looking at those external and internal factors which facilitate a gender agenda at some level, drawing on the case study exemplars of 'best practice'.

2 Defining success in the case studies: an unproblematic activity?

The most common indicator of gendered success is an increase in the proportion of women in senior academic or management positions. This measure has limitations, which were discussed by several of the case studies. However, the difficulty of identifying cross national indicators of success which moved beyond this emerged clearly from the responses of the Equality Challenge Unit (2016).

Public universities are elite fora. Academic staff, particularly those at senior level, are typically drawn from that elite. Although the composition of the elite varies slightly cross - nationally, it is typically predominantly male and middle class. Those who are outside those groups can be seen as 'outsiders', who although they differ among themselves, are mostly 'confronted with the same dominant and privileged norm citizen, with slight differences in

accent' (Verloo 2006, 218). The minorities who are included are likely to share some key elite characteristic with those in power. Thus, for example, insofar as women are admitted, particularly at senior level, they are likely to be from elite backgrounds. This was particularly apparent in the Portuguese case study (Carvalho & Machado-Taylor 2016). Effectively senior women in that context are chosen as and remain 'token women', passing as men, but otherwise leaving the structure and culture of higher education unchanged. In such cases, the impact of change in the gender profile is purely symbolic. When such women are used to legitimate an individualistic model of success, and to denigrate a focus on gendered structural and cultural factors, symbolic success is bought at a high price. Indeed, the presence of such women can be used to suggest that the gender 'problem' has been solved, and the views of such women may reinforce the idea that universities are gender neutral organisations. This may happen even in contexts such as the Turkish organisation (Atay 2016) where such women create structures to embed gender in teaching and research and to act as advocates for such changes nationally and internationally. Implicit in these contexts is a suggestion that women experience no discrimination as long as they behave like men. As recognised by Cockburn (1991, p.219) their acceptance is fragile since their status as honorary males may be withdrawn at any time: 'You may find a place as long as you simulate the norm and hide your difference. We will know you are different and continue ultimately to treat you as different, but if you yourself specify your difference, your claim to equality will be nil'. In this context, acceptance is particularly undermined by maternity, and by domestic and family responsibilities. Hence it is no coincidence that these are seen as the ultimate causes of women's gender inequality in such contexts, with both men and women in power positions conveniently locating the problem outside the organisation. Such attitudes limit the kinds of actions that are perceived as necessary, and in this sense ultimately legitimate the hegemonic masculinist structures.

Paradoxically the situation in the UAE potentially offers a larger negotiating space (Kemp et al. 2016). The creation of what was initially a women's only university created a 'safe space' where women could study and work. The decision to include male students can be seen as an attempt to increase the university's perceived status in a wider society where males are valorised. The existence of the university is tolerated in the wider male dominated society in a context where women are high educational achievers, and where such achievement is seen as economically necessary and ultimately as a way of avoiding reliance on 'ex-patriates'. Its cultural appropriateness is legitimated ideologically and tolerated since it is under the aegis of the dominant national elite. Thus although ultimate power remains in male hands at a societal level, there is a strong sense that the university President has considerable real power. The sharp differentiation of a 'female world' in such contexts may paradoxically give women greater access to senior positions, albeit within very considerable constraints, than in more mixed and purportedly gender neutral worlds. Therefore in the UAE case study, although the University Council is predominantly male, women hold the top two management positions and make up over a third of those at professorial level. There is a strong sense that (as in Turkey) education is seen as a socially appropriate space for women. Not surprisingly in that context, as in Western societies, there are tensions arising from the societal misrecognition of women (Frazer 2008). There are also tensions between rather essentialist views of women and the focus on the importance of international experiences in preparing them for leadership positions. It is not surprising that in the UAE case study, as in the Portuguese and Turkish ones, the university is depicted as non-discriminatory. The very existence of this female dominated university, implicitly legitimates new kinds of female role models while maintaining both the appearance of ultimate male control and a rhetoric surrounding the purportedly gender neutral nature of the organisation. Thus the case study university is treading a delicate line between

subordination to ultimate male power holders and the empowerment of women as current and future workers.

These case studies illustrate the limitations of focusing mainly on increases in the proportion of women in senior positions. But it can be argued that in societies where gender is a key marker, diversity in the gender profile of those in senior positions in higher education is still important at several levels. The EU (EC 2012a) sees diversity as contributing to research innovation and the OECD (2012) as contributing to economic growth. Diversity makes an important contribution to governance and effectiveness in business contexts (Richmond 2015). If we assume that talent (however defined) is normally distributed in the population in a bell shaped curve, then excluding a large proportion of the female population has consequences as regards the public availability of talent. The under-representation of women in senior positions has also been seen as a social justice issue; as symbolic violence (Bourdieu 2001) and as limiting the availability of role models to students and junior faculty. Hence although changing the gender profile of those at senior level in universities is not sufficient in itself to change the elite nature of universities or their managerialist practices, it nevertheless is an important objective for those concerned with organizational change (EC 2012a). Insofar as senior positions typically involve organisational power at some level, changing the gender profile of those in such positions is an important objective and one which is remarkably resistant to change cross-nationally. Nevertheless, in feminist terms, simply changing the gender profile of those in senior positions is not sufficient.

The European Research Area (EC 2012b, p. 12) involving 34 countries, has defined gendered success in terms of three pragmatic political goals: firstly gender equal representation in all fields and hierarchical positions; secondly the abolition of structural and cultural barriers to women's careers; and thirdly the integration of a gender dimension in all teaching and research contexts. These goals envisage the breaking down of vertical and hierarchical

segregation and the embedding of change within a teaching and research context. The Austrian (Wroblewski 2016) and Swedish (Peterson & Jordansson 2016) case studies provide insights into what a new more comprehensive agenda for change in higher education might look like. The Austrian case study is particularly important since it focuses on an organisation which not only (as in the UAE) has a female dominated top management structure, but one which is explicitly feminist and which includes feminist goals in its developmental plan, actively problematizing the power relationships between men and women. Thus it legitimates challenges to masculinist 'othering' of those who on the basis of gender, sexuality or race find themselves outside the hegemonic discourse, and it includes feminist objectives both in its research and teaching and in its policies. The Swedish case study presents a more complex picture of how gender is simultaneously done and undone at the level of structure, culture, interaction and identity in a new university. Gender in that university is simultaneously re-inscribed through, for example, the problematizing of women's but not men's stereotypical choices. As in the Ely and Myerson's (2010) study, gender has become part of both the Austrian and Swedish universities' collective goals. However, both case studies look at these organisations through the eyes of those in senior positions. Hence, it is not clear to what extent these feminist ideals actually penetrate the day-to-day reality of the organisation and the identities and interactional patterns of those at the bottom (O'Connor et al. 2015). Nevertheless it is striking that the rhetoric of the organisation as expressed by senior women in both the Austrian and Swedish case studies is feminist (contrasting with the patterns emerging in the Portuguese, Turkish and UAE case studies).

Particular inequalities may be differentially salient in different contexts (Yuval-Davies 2006; Ferree 2008). It is clear that in some countries (such as South Africa) gender intersects with race. Crenshaw (1991) is credited with the concept of intersectionality to highlight the existence of multiple bases of discrimination (e.g. class, ethnicity, gender). Walby (2012)

identified the importance of retaining a focus on the actions of the powerful and the relationships between these creators of inequalities. Risman (2004, p. 444) argues that the mechanisms involved in perpetuating gender inequality may differ from those involved in class or racial inequality, and hence that each of these structures should be analysed separately. South Africa is particularly interesting in this context. The case study university (Zulu 2016), a traditionally white university, was unusual in that women made up roughly one third of those at (full) professorial level (no racial breakdown was available), as well as having the fourth highest proportion of women in South Africa at the most senior management level (44%). There was a suggestion that the replacement of white male Rectors by black male ones had facilitated the greater dominance of black women in middle management positions. White men and white women continued to equally dominate research professorships; with a minority of black men and no black female research professors. Thus it implicitly raised questions about the implications of black women's involvement in mid-level management positions, given their apparent difficulties in accessing professorships. That study as well as the Swedish and Indian case studies implicitly raised questions about the declining status and power of those in these positions.

Ideally then in exemplars of best practice we would expect to find not only gendered outcomes in terms of, for example, the presence of women in positions of academic and managerial power, but also structural and cultural changes that would facilitate the transformation of hegemonic male dominated masculinist structures and culture, and that such changes would be reflected in day-to-day interactional patterns and the identities of those working in them. Furthermore, since universities are ultimately about knowledge, one would expect to find constructions of gender embedded within the core teaching and research function, in the core interests and values of the stakeholders and the core purpose of the organisation. Such patterns could be seen as a reflection of a critical feminist vision in Myerson

and Kolb's terms (2000, p563) 'resisting and re-visiting the dominant discourse'. The combination of all these elements within the case studies was extremely rare.

3 Sources of change: The complexity of a gendered change model

It is paradoxical that despite the extent and rapidity of change in higher educational organisations, few models of change have been developed since Kanter's critical mass theory (Kanter 1977; Kanter et al. 1992). Benschop and van den Brink (2017) noted that typically academics do not suggest how is to be achieved. There has been a widespread assumption that changes, such as for example from collegiality to managerialism, reflect the impact of external forces directly or indirectly related to neo-liberalism (Deem et al. 2008). Lawrence et al. (2011, p.52) stressed the importance of 'examining the practices of individual and collective actors aimed at creating, maintaining and disrupting institutions'. Feminist approaches to institutionalism see 'institutional change (and stability) as driven by gendered processes from within and without' and note that 'further work is needed to synthesise analyses and to search for common causal mechanisms' (Mackay et al, 2010). The European Foundation for Quality Management (2016) put forward the EFQM model as a 'practical tool' to assess and enhance organizational performance. Based on the case studies a number of factors were identified including:

- External factors, such as the state, and including the legislative context, the market and the wider systemic policy context (including neo-liberalism and managerialism)
- Internal factors such as:
    - Historical characteristics including size, ethos, teaching and research traditions in the gender studies area
    - Leadership at formal and gender champion levels

    - Structures directly or indirectly related to a gender agenda (e.g the centralisation of power, gender related structures and their reporting lines)
    - Culture related to gender (e.g. commitment of senior management, gender sensitive criteria, processes and policies and their implementation)
    - The centrality of gender to core activities including the curriculum and research projects, and to the core purpose of the organisation
- Specific interventions (such as Athena Swan and national networks) intended to impact on some aspect of the gender agenda and which depend for their success on internal support at some level.

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The model, rather than focusing on specific gender related strategies, highlights the external and internal sources of change and their implications for a new gender agenda. The sheer multiplicity of factors involved and the multi-directionality of influence indicates the complexity of the change process. Thus external factors including the legislative and wider policy context and their impact are seen as related to specific interventions and to the location of the organisation in the higher educational system as well as to its formal leadership. Formal and informal leadership are seen as inter-related and ultimately associated with the characteristics of the organisation and its culture, as well as to the gender content of the core activities of teaching and research. Formal leadership is also seen as inter-related with the structure and culture as with gender sensitive criteria and processes, and ultimately with the centrality of gender to the purpose of the organisation and to the values and interests of its stakeholders. Issues of timing and serendipity further complicate the process underlining its contextual character.

There is a quite remarkable similarity in the proportion of women at full professorial level in the case studies, despite their very considerable differences in legislative and policy contexts. The Austrian case study with 56% of those at full professorial level being women is exceptional and may well reflect the combined impact of facilitative external and internal factors. However in the majority of the other case studies, roughly 30 % of those at this level are women (i.e. Turkish, Swedish, South African, UAE, Irish, Indian, Australian and New Zealand ones). These figures are particularly impressive in the context of an EU average of 21% (EC 2016). Similarly in more than half of the case studies at least 40% of senior management are women (e.g. in the Austrian, New Zealand, Swedish, South African, Indian and UAE case studies). Such patterns can be seen as evidence of increasing global convergence, despite very different legislative and policy contexts (Feree & Zippel 2015). They can be also seen as reflecting the importance of internal factors. In any case they illustrate the possibility of change: a possibility which is heightened in the presence of both internal and external factors.

3.1 External Factors

External factors are frequently perceived as crucial in affecting issues related to gender in higher education. They include the state and in particular its legislative framework, the market and the wider policy context which frequently reflects the relationship between the state and the market and the perceived purpose of higher education (and its taken-for-granted unproblematised gendered character). Such external factors also include supra national structures such as the EU and the OECD and globalising processes such as neo-liberalism.

Higher education systems differ in their relationship with the state which has implications for the extent to which the state can, particularly through its legislative framework, drive an equality agenda. This implicitly raises the question of the gendered nature of large

organisations in general and the state in particular. Historically the state has been patriarchal, although like all large organisations, it can be argued that this is historical rather than inevitable (Connell 1994; Ferguson 1984; Charles. 2014). Indeed it is clear that the composition of some states (such as Sweden) and the policies of others (such as Austria) challenge the depiction of the state as inevitably masculinist.

In terms of legislative contexts, Austria and Sweden are exemplars of best practice. The importance of a pro-active legislative context is illustrated by the Austrian case study (Wroblewski 2016). The Austrian Universities Act (2002) not only identified systemic equality goals, but also required each university to identify concrete goals for their organisations with performance being linked to contracts for services with the relevant state department and being monitored annually. It obliged universities to create internal equality structures including an autonomous representative equal opportunities working group, with the power to impose sanctions including stopping appointment competitions, and an administrative organisational unit which also co-ordinated teaching and research in gender studies. This legislative framework has been very successful in doubling the proportion of women at professorial and Rector level over a ten year period. Austrian law puts a general duty on the public sector to give preference to female candidates as long as the share of women in the respective category is below 50% (Wroblewski 2016). Such a legislative framework is not sufficient, since the Austrian case study is exceptional even within Austria. It did produce the only example of equal representation (56% women) at (full) professorial level, in the context of a feminist senior management structure.

Sweden also has a long tradition of gender equality legislation. This legislative context, reinforced by the involvement of the state in the appointments of Rectors and Vice-Rectors led to equal proportions of women and men at rectorate level. Gender mainstreaming is the key principle, with the state being involved in setting targets based on the cascade model

recruitment base, with preferential treatment of the under-represented gender permitted in the interest of gender equality. The overall under-representation of women at professorial level in Sweden, as well as consistent evidence of bias in allocation of research funding (Wenneras & Wold 1997; O'Connor & Fauve-Chamoux 2016), illustrates the limitations of this approach.

Although the state is an important player in higher education, it is not the only one. Clark (1983) writing before the advent of managerialism highlighted the importance of the market. Blackmore and Sachs (2007, pp. 240-241) suggested that educational markets are at best 'quasi' or 'hybrid' markets since 'they are both produced by and responded to by the state through its educational policies'. Furthermore, although markets purport to be gender neutral, the wider male dominated context in which they operate has consequences. At the most basic level it affects the differential valuing of knowledge created by men and women (for example in engineering or technology versus midwifery or nursing). Indeed the very exclusion from the market of unpaid work (which is still predominantly carried out by women) implicitly creates a gendered playing field. The structures and practices of that market are typically masculinist and reflect and reinforce male privileging at various levels, with capitalism and patriarchy often effectively colluding with one another.

Universities have always been part of wider social projects (O'Connor 2014). However, it has been suggested that the pace and scale of change has increased. Neo-liberalism has impacted on the commodification of knowledge, the valorization of disciplines which are market oriented, the effective prioritization of potentially commercially useful research, and the implicit narrowing of the nature and purpose of higher education and of its potential in critiquing the meta structures of capitalism and patriarchy (Slaughter & Leslie 1999; Slaughter & Rhoades 2010; Blackmore et al, 2015). Neo-liberalism in general and managerialism in particular can be seen as embedding a culture which is masculinist (Lynch et al. 2012; O'Connor 2014).

In addition to the state, international advocates can also be identified. These have included the EC (2012a) and the OECD (2012), both of whom have been strongly supportive of a gender agenda. It is ironical that although other agendas they have supported - particularly those related to the commercialisation of knowledge, the ranking of organisations and the adoption of quality procedures - have become deeply embedded in higher educational institutions internationally, the gender agenda has been largely ignored, other than where it is specifically linked to research funding (e.g. Horizon 2020, a large EU funded research programme, and Athena Swan). Nevertheless, the OECD's (2012, p. 18) critique of higher educational institutions has been trenchant with references to '[p]ersistent discriminatory social institutions and cultural norms'. European funding for gender action and research projects has reinforced the legitimacy of an organisational focus on gender, although commitment can be largely rhetorical (O'Connor 2016).

In summary then the external factors have created a variety of strategies including targets, quotas, preferential hiring, mainstreaming and structures related to gender. However to be effective these have to be adopted by universities to bring about gender change.

3.2 *Internal factors*

The distinction between external and internal factors is somewhat artificial since the wider societal context, and/or the university's positioning in the higher educational system may create pressure to define its ethos, structure or culture. Nevertheless the distinction seems useful since it differentiates between those elements over which a single university has very little control at any moment in time, and those which it can control at least to some extent. It is suggested that the internal factors are of three kinds: firstly the more long standing characteristics of the organisation (including their size, ethos and traditions in the gender area); secondly, their

current structure and culture including their leadership at formal and informal levels; and thirdly, gender related specific interventions which require internal support at some level.

Several of the case studies (particularly the Austrian, Irish, New Zealand, Portuguese UAE and Swedish ones) highlighted the importance of the characteristics of the case study organisation in facilitating gender change. Such characteristics included being relatively new (Irish, New Zealand, UAE and Portuguese); having a 'radical', 'social justice' 'creative' 'innovatory' or 'non-traditional' focus (Swedish; Austrian; Irish, Portuguese, New Zealand) and having a tradition of work in women's/gender studies (the Irish, Austrian, Turkish and Indian case studies). In western society women only higher education organisations are devalued but they can provide women with important negotiating spaces and access to power (as in the UAE case study). Thus the impact of the past creates to varying degrees a potential as regards a gender agenda at some level, with those organisations that are in some way marginal to the wider hegemony being best positioned in terms of this agenda.

In terms of the contemporary internal characteristics, virtually all of the case studies stressed the importance of leadership at some level. Leadership is crucially important in creating change and setting agendas, whether that is 'top down' or 'bottom up' leadership. Such leadership occurs in what are essentially masculinist organisations. They are also organisations that are increasingly penetrated by global pressures involving the redefinition of the purpose of higher education in the context of a concern with metrics and global university rankings (Lynch et al. 2012; Blackmore et al., 2015; O'Hagan et al. 2017). In such contexts leadership from the top may be ultimately shown in the refusal to accept this definition of the purpose of higher education (as in the Austrian case study).

In all of the case studies, there was some level of support by the Rector/President for a gender agenda, although the extent of that commitment varied both between organisations and

(as in the Indian case study) in the same organisation over time. It was clear from the case studies that the greater the demonstrated commitment of formal leaders, the greater the impact on organisational culture. In the Austrian study that commitment was actively embodied by those in top management internally and externally. In the Swedish case study the Vice Chancellor participated in workshops and seminars on gender equality, while in the Irish one the President's role was purely symbolic (i.e. opening/closing events). In several of the case studies (such as the Portuguese, Irish and Indian ones) the gender profile of senior academic and management positions was seen as ultimately reflecting his/her commitment to a gender agenda. The Australian case study (White 2016) argues that the presence of two women VCs impacted on the proportion of women in the professoriate and on the wider organisational culture, including the gender pay gap.

Although Clarke's (1983) focus on the power of the academic oligarchy (i.e. professors at the top of the academic hierarchy) seems fanciful in many contexts, in countries such as Portugal there is a very close tie between academic expertise and political power, often mediated through current or past university rectors. In such contexts an academic oligarchy continues to be an important reality, with its tentacles extending inside and outside the academy. Thus former male rectors were important in the selection of women rectors, although both denied the importance of gender. In most other contexts the impact of managerialism has weakened the power of the professoriate, while maintaining the illusion of gender neutrality.

It was striking that in the case studies where a gender agenda was most embedded (such as for example in the Austrian one), responsibility for moving forward a gender agenda was not seen simply as a human resource issue. This is particularly important in the context of the increasing corporatisation of human resources, which increases the likelihood of the reduction of gender to a tick-box exercise. In the Indian and Turkish case studies, where policy focused on empowering the women rather than changing the organisation, Women Studies Centres

were given a role in promoting a gender agenda, but they were isolated from powerful decision making networks. In several of the case studies (such as the UK study) line management was seen as having a responsibility to deliver on gender-a strategy that assumes either the existence of gender competent line management or at least some motivation to facilitate it. In the Australian context, key performance indicators (KPIs) were used effectively to increase women's representation among senior staff and to reduce the gender pay gap.

Several of the case studies (including the Irish, Turkish and Australian) also referred to the existence and importance of informal gender champions, who in different ways exerted leadership in the gender area. The Irish case study focuses particularly on the strategies they used. Thus, gender equality was framed as key to organisational success by the informal gender champions who 'managed management', leveraged prestigious external funding, were involved in 'perverse alignments', activated ties in pursuit of collective objectives and challenged organisational practices by 'provocative misbehaviour' (O'Connor 2016). That case study also illustrated the gender consequences of purportedly gender neutral actions taken by formal leaders in particular contexts, and the role played by synergies and chance in bringing about the increase in the proportion of women in the professoriate.

In the Austrian case study gender was integrated not only into the core activities of teaching and research but into the very nature and purpose of the university and its vision of itself. The Swedish case study identified control over space and a discipline as key elements in effectively perpetuating and consolidating a male power base, and through a focus on open plan offices and multidisciplinarity tried to 'undo' this.

In summary internal factors (particularly formal and informal leadership) were important in facilitating a gender agenda. There was a wider societal and cultural context, with

the leaders' endorsement or challenge of that wider context, having consequences for a gender agenda.

3.2.1 Specific interventions

Such interventions frequently reflected developments or programmes outside the organisation, but were mobilised within it. At a certain level such interventions can be seen as reflecting underlying tensions concerning the legitimacy of a male dominated higher educational system given increasing pressures as regards representation and public accountability (Feree & Zippel 2015) and increasing concern with the positive impact of diversity on research innovation and economic growth (EU 2012; OECD 2012). In such contexts there is perhaps an inevitable pressure to 'solve' the gender problem by 'fixing the women' rather than challenging the gendered nature of the organisation.

A number of the case studies identify specific foci for best practice initiatives: for example strategies that facilitated the empowerment of women individually or collectively, or that facilitated professional aspirational networking among women and the creation of women-friendly or feminist structures or policies (Benschop 2009; Richmond 2015, Wroblewski 2015). Relatively little attention has been paid to theorising the impact of specific interventions on women's agency or on wider organisational practices or policy reform. However, O'Meara and Stromquist (2015) used evolutionary critical theory to understand how peer networks worked as 'third spaces' supporting agentic perspectives and generally facilitating women's career advancement. They found that although peer networks increased awareness and encouraged accountability, they were much less effective in promoting organisational change or even in encouraging collective efforts to solve common problems.

The New Zealand case study (Neale 2016) focuses particularly on various kinds of leadership training which are seen as facilitating the relatively high levels of participation by women in the executive and in the professoriate. It is clear that such leadership training (particularly through the national women in leadership training programme) tries not only to prepare and empower individual women, but through feedback loops to the senior leadership team in the case study university, attempts to create change in the policies, culture and processes in the university itself. Thus an attempt is made to ensure that such leadership training acts in a 'bi-focal' (De Vries 2012) way, changing both the individual as well as the organisation.

In the UK case study (Barnard 2016) the focus is on the Athena Swan Charter (initially introduced to cover STEM disciplines in the UK and now extended to all disciplines and areas, and on a pilot basis to Australia and Ireland). It attracted relatively little interest until receipt of medical research funding was made conditional on the achievement of such awards in 2011. Athena Swan constitutes a systemic attempt to identify the under-representation of women as an organisational issue, which is 'owned' initially by line management and then by all of those in the organisation. As such it has raised awareness of gender at some level across a wide range of higher educational institutions. In many ways it can be seen as an attempt to implement gender mainstreaming by embedding an equality vision in the organisation at all levels and generating a potential willingness to tackle the organisational culture. However, it is difficult to know to what extent it actually increases commitment to gender equality (as opposed to instrumental box-ticking). Indeed, Barnard (2016) noted that even in those departments which received the highest award (i.e. gold) there was relatively little emphasis on change at senior academic or management levels; and even where it existed the focus was largely on encouraging and training women. Thus the implicit assumption was that women, not the organisation were 'the problem'. Indeed increases in the proportion of women at professorial

level in the UK have mainly occurred outside science, engineering and technology, areas that to date have not been the focus of Athena Swan.

There is no doubt that with committed gender aware leadership, Athena Swan can move the gender agenda forward in organisations, and can make a substantial difference to many women's lives. Like all mainstreaming initiatives, it can be reduced to a rhetorical exercise since it implicitly assumes the existence of a gender neutral meritocracy: one which ignores the gendered nature of organisations (Acker 1990; O'Connor & O'Hagan 2015; Nielsen 2015; van den Brink & Benschop 2012). In this respect it is very different to the kind of critical feminist approach which is seen as necessary for a new gender agenda.

It is difficult to categorically conclude that specific interventions cause positive gender outcomes or bring about cultural change. However without such a focus, the achievement of gendered outcomes remains very much a 'black box' - a position which itself inhibits change.

4 Summary and conclusions

This chapter reflects a critical feminist perspective, combined with various types of institutional perspectives (neo, inhabited and feminist). Thus it starts from the assumption that universities, as well as the wider structures in which they are embedded and their internal practices and processes are gendered. It endorses the importance of developing a new gender agenda and moving towards a model of gendered change.

A focus on the proportion of women in senior positions has been widely used as an indicator of success, and was used and critiqued in a number of the case studies. These suggest that even in the presence of unhelpful legal and policy contexts, internal factors (such as leadership) can increase the proportion of women in senior academic or management positions.

That can meet the need for institutional legitimacy but may not challenge the dominant paradigm. Thus women can be recruited as tokens or trophies and can be used to perpetuate a male dominated masculinist system with the implicit or explicit suggestion that a gender 'problem' never existed, or if it did that it has been solved. However, there are conceptual and operational difficulties in moving beyond this indicator. Thus, there are challenges in defining feminist leaders and identifying policies that change the structures of male power, rather than being simply pro-women in the sense that they facilitate women's reconciliation of paid work and family in a world where child care is overwhelmingly seen as women's responsibility (see Wroblewski 2015). If a critical feminist perspective does not exist, it is virtually impossible to identify indicators of organisational success which move beyond the proportion of women in senior positions. Hence the importance of this perspective.

The construction of success as reflected in a gender agenda is constantly evolving. That construction is seen as an iterative process, where each success stimulates a reflection on what has been achieved and what still remains to be done, drawing on a critical feminist perspective. In this way success, for example in increasing the proportion of women in the professoriate, does not become a corporate trophy, but a stimulus to further change. Thus in different times and contexts, intersectionality (as in the Austrian and South African case studies) may come into greater prominence.

Issues surrounding legitimacy are important for public higher educational organisations, and gender inequality undermines that legitimacy. Frequently universities have multiple stake holders, strong power blocks and little appetite to establish priorities, preferring to live with creative ambiguity as a way of maintaining the status quo. It is not surprising that initiatives to tackle gender inequality may become subsumed into wider power related objectives (such as maintaining the elite as in the Portuguese study). Embracing a perception of universities as gendered organisations involves a fundamental paradigm shift. Most of these

best practice case study organisations endorsed limited elements of a gender agenda. Their relative success was reflected in the fact that in the majority of them, roughly 30% or more of those at professoriate level were women, as were at least 40% of those in senior management positions. However it was only those organisations whose values, interests and power relationships (Greenwood & Hinings 1996) were most compatible with challenging the dominant discourse (Meyerson & Kolb 2000) who showed evidence of that paradigm shift. This seemed most likely to occur in contexts where external and internal factors were supportive of the emergence of a gendered paradigm.

A comparison for example, of the Swedish and Indian case studies, with roughly similar proportions of women in the professoriate, challenges assumptions about the importance of legislative and policy contexts and implicitly suggests the importance of internal factors. In several of the case studies the importance of 'top down' feminist or at least gender competent management as well as 'bottom up' gender champions emerges clearly. The case studies also indicate the importance of synergies within the organisation and between it and the external facilitators in making change possible. They show the role played by specific interventions such as networks and Athena Swan. However it is not always possible to definitely identify cause and effect, illustrating the fact that change is a dynamic process.

The Austrian case study (Wroblewski 2016) intriguingly concludes that a feminist rectorate is an outcome rather than a cause of the feminist orientation and practices in the university. This underlines the idea that a new gender agenda cannot simply focus on the recruitment or promotion of women to senior positions. Rather it needs to involve a fundamental rethinking of the nature and valuing of particular kinds of knowledge; an identification of power differentials between men and women, effectively a paradigm shift. It is difficult to imagine what such an agenda might involve although there are clues, particularly in the Swedish and Austrian case studies: feminist leadership, breakdown of horizontal and

vertical segregation, shared spaces, multidisciplinarity, less hierarchical leadership, an end to a purportedly gender neutral culture, practices and procedures, less binary choices and interactions, reflecting a gendering of the teaching and research agendas, as well as the embedding of gender within the perceived purpose of the organisation and the values and interests of the most powerful stakeholders. The model of gendered change (figure 1) attempts to convey this.

Particular types of organisational contexts (e.g. new, mould breaking) appear to be most likely to be conducive to that kind of agenda. It is no coincidence that best practice is most apparent in a small, disciplinarily creative, art university in Austria with its high staff/student ratio. Such a structure is furthest removed from the neo-liberal commodification which is increasingly one of the features of higher education. This raises questions about the extent to which traditional universities can ever move beyond token changes. It implicitly raises the question of the extent to which a new agenda must be rooted in a reframing of knowledge, as well as of organisational structures and cultures. This involves essentially academic activities, albeit ones that are increasingly affected by neo-liberal, managerialist masculinist processes and pressures. In that context the relatively large, but also non-traditional Swedish university offers hope as regards the possibility of a paradigm shift. In both contexts the gender equality goals of the organisation are not seen as something extra, but are part of the core vision.

The case studies can be seen as addressing different aspects of gender inequality and offering different and partial solutions. Cumulatively, they provide an implicit challenge to the taken-for-granted nature of the existing paradigm. They also challenge assumptions that the creation of a network or a programme for increasing women's skills is sufficient. Such initiatives are important but they are limited. The time for a more ambitious agenda is long overdue.

Change in organisations is always difficult. As suggested by the model, the process of change is complex and multifaceted and ultimately involves a paradigm shift. The theoretical perspective combing a critical feminist with an institutional approach (including neo, inhabited and feminist perspectives) underpins the complexity of the model. The case studies highlight the ways in which existing male dominated masculinist power structures may inhibit paradigm shift while appearing to meet the requirements of gender equality in the interest of institutional legitimacy. As such they make an important theoretical contribution to to understanding both the extent and limits of change. The route and the destination have varied, but each of the case studies indicates the possibility of change and at least partial success. As such, they are both a source of hope and a motivation for further change in what are male dominated masculinist structures. Do public universities have a future if they do not re-envision themselves? How can they do this without embracing a new gender agenda? By identifying key elements in that process, and by illustrating them using case studies this book plays an important role in showing that change is possible, that dominant gendered discourse can be revisited and a new gender agenda re-imagined.

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